



Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

North Carolina Assessment Specifications Summary

Measures of Student Learning: North Carolina's Common Exams for English Language Arts I, III, and IV

Purpose of the Assessments

- Measures of Student Learning: North Carolina's Common Exams for English Language Arts (ELA) I, III, and IV will measure students' academic progress in the *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)* for English Language Arts, adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education in June 2010.
- Common Exam scores (along with any other relevant end-of-course or end-of-grade assessment scores) will be used in the Educational Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) to produce student growth measures to satisfy Standards 6 and 8 of the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System.
- Common Exams were developed to replace locally developed assessments, providing teachers and principals with a common measure for all students state-wide during a given testing window. Educators are encouraged to use Common Exam scores in determining the student's final grade for each course. LEAs are encouraged to adopt policies regarding the use of Common Exam results in assigning final grades.
- Common Exams will NOT be used for school and district accountability under the READY Accountability Model or for Federal reporting purposes.
- For more information on the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System go to <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/educatoreffect/>.

Curriculum Cycle

- June 2010: North Carolina State Board of Education adoption of the *CCSS*.
- 2011–2012: Item development for the Common Exams in ELA I, III, and IV.
- 2012–2013: Operational administration of Common Exams in ELA I, III, and IV.

Standards

- The *CCSS* are posted at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/common-core/>. Each grade includes a set of content standards.
- The *CCSS* are divided into strands which address a specific set of College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards. These strands are reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

Prioritization of Standards

- The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) invited teachers to collaborate and develop recommendations for a prioritization of the standards indicating the relative importance of each standard, the anticipated instructional time, and the appropriateness of the standard for multiple-choice and constructed response item formats. Subsequently, curriculum and test development staff from the NCDPI met to review the results from the teacher panels and to develop weight distributions across the domains for each grade level.
- Tables 1 through 3 describe the percentage of test questions that will appear on the Common Exams forms in ELA. The majority of the items will be multiple-choice (89% to 92%), while a minority will be constructed response (8% to 11%). Students will probably take 20% to 25% of the available testing time to answer the constructed response (CR) items. As such, CR items will be worth two to four points each.

Table 1. Test Specification Weights for the Common Exams in ELA I

Domain	Standards	MC	CR
Language	L4, L5	11-15%	0%
Reading for Information	RI1- RI3	20-29%	0%
	RI 4- RI6	14-19%	2-8%
Reading for Literature	RL1- RL4, RL6	17-26%	0%
	RL5	6-9%	2-4%
Total percent of items		89-92%	8-11%
<i>Total percent of score points</i>		<i>77-83%</i>	<i>17-23%</i>

Table 2. Test Specification Weights for the Common Exams in ELA III

Domain	Standards	MC	CR
Language	L4, L5	12-16%	0%
Reading for Information	RI2, RI4	11-15%	0%
	RI1, RI3, RI5-6	24-34%	3-5%
Reading for Literature	RL1- RL4, RL6	22-31%	4-6%
Total		89-92%	8-11%
<i>Total percent of score points</i>		<i>77-83%</i>	<i>17-23%</i>

Table 3. Test Specification Weights for the Common Exams in ELA IV

Domain	Standards	MC	CR
Language	L4, 5	12-16%	0%
Reading for Information	RI1, 4	13-18%	0%
	RI2,3,5,6	21-31%	4-7%
Reading for Literature	RL1,2,4	18-27%	3-6%%
	RL3,5,6	4-6%	0%

Total	89-92%	8-11%
<i>Total percent of score points</i>	<i>77-83%</i>	<i>17-23%</i>

Cognitive Rigor

- The multiple-choice test questions will require students to read, comprehend, and recall information. Also, students will be expected to analyze the reading passages; identify points of view, claims, and evidence; apply concepts and skills; and make inferences.
- Common Exams constructed response questions will draw from the following *CCSS* writing standards:
 - Standard 1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
 - Standard 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
 - Standard 9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Types of Items

- The Common Exams for ELA I, III, and IV will consist of four-response-option multiple-choice items.
- Each form will consist of four reading passages: two will be drawn from works of literature; two will be informational texts drawn from the domains of History/Social Studies or Science.
- Students will answer up to ten multiple-choice items and up to two constructed response items per passage.
- The total test will contain thirty-three to thirty-seven multiple-choice items and three to four constructed response items.
- Most of the constructed response items will be short answer and one will be extended response. Each constructed response item will target the reading skills shown in tables 1 through 3 and will also measure specific writing skills.
- The short answer CR questions will align to writing Standard 9 and can typically be answered well in a paragraph or less. Short answer questions will be worth 2 points each.
- The single extended response question aligns to writing Standards 1, 4, and 9 and can typically be answered well in three paragraphs. The extended response question will be worth up to 4 points.

Testing Structure and Time

- The test will be presented in two forty-five minute parts. Students will be given forty minutes to complete each part. Students should monitor the clock to ensure they allow themselves adequate time to respond to the questions.

Delivery Mode

- The Common Exams in ELA are designed for paper/pencil mode; however, some districts may choose to convert the paper/pencil test for online administration through their own online administration systems. It is a local decision to determine if the Common Exams will be administered in paper/pencil or online.